

SUPPLEMENT TO THE APPLICATION BY CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
FOR A HINDU STUDIES CHAIR

September 6, 1988

Concordia University is hereby applying for a Chair in Hindu Studies to be supported by the Endowment Assistance for Ethnic Chairs of the Canadian Ethnic Studies Program. This application is the result of a continuing interest dating from 1982 by Concordia University and representatives of the Indo-Canadian community in Montreal to establish this Chair. Since that time there have been discussions between the university and the Indo-Canadian community, as well as meetings between university officials, community representatives and Canadian government officials and advisors.

The Chair in Hindu Studies is to be housed in the department of Religion, which maintains many programs of multicultural traditions and philosophies. Development of new courses of undergraduate and graduate teaching as well as programs of research and the training of graduate students will be built around the Chair. There will be a strong multidisciplinary dimension to all of these developments. They will utilize resources not only in the department of Religion, but other academic departments both at Concordia and at universities in the Montreal area.

Outline of Development Plan

It is envisaged that the person selected to hold the chair will have expertise in Hindu philosophy, tradition, and culture. The holder will also have training in the social scientific study of

ethnic and religious groups.

The overall program of intensive academic study of Hindu philosophy, tradition, and culture that is based in the Chair of Hindu Studies is the first of its kind in Canada. Expansion of current undergraduate and graduate offerings in Hindu studies is one of the major priorities. There will be new Honours and Majors programs that only become possible with this additional resource. New undergraduate courses will be in such areas as: Hindu tradition and literature in the periods of the Vedas and Upanisads, the Religious, Social and Legal developments in the Medieval Period, the Classical Philosophical Schools, and Hindu Thought and Institutions in the Modern Period.

At the graduate level, the department will add to the current Masters in the History and Philosophy of Religion a new Specialization in Hindu Studies. There will be new course offerings in Hindu religion, thought and culture that fit into present listings such as: History of Hindu Thought and Institutions, Mysticism, Religious Language, Faith and Reason in Religion and Comparative Ethics.

The Ph.D. program in Comparative Ethics will also develop with the addition of the Chair in Hindu Studies. Seminars and tutorials in Hindu Studies will deepen the possibilities for doctoral level comparative work that utilizes Hindu material.

The department will be able to expand the number of new admissions and broaden its recognized areas of competence in Hindu religion, philosophy and culture. In addition, commencing at the graduate level and eventually being integrated into undergraduate course offerings, the department will include sociological studies of the Hindu community in Canada in its listings. In cooperation with the department of Sociology and Anthropology and the department of History, graduate students will be able to take advanced level courses in: Ethnic Studies-the nature of the field and its development over the past years, Research Methods - practical application of ways of studying ethnic and religious communities, Ethnic communities of Canada-a study of various communities and the particular and general challenges that they have to face, and Hinduism and Modernity-the challenges that modern life, particularly in the context of North America, presents for Hindu institutions, patterns of ethics, and thought.

The research area of the Chair's activities is also very important to the development of this position. A principle aim of the Chair will be in launching and maintaining research into the life of the Hindu community in Quebec and in Canada. Research plans and funded grant activities will be drawn up that explore issues within the wider topics of settlement, acculturation, modernization, and intra- and inter-communal relations. Depending on the particular background and interests

of the holder of the chair, areas in the community's developing ethnic/religious identity, family life, ritual activities, religious thought, ethical norms, understanding of the place of women, etc. may be investigated. These studies will be undertaken in terms of three broad frameworks. First, the dynamics of development of the life of this relatively new community in Canada, and particularly in Quebec, will be explored. Second, methods, issues, and conclusions concerning this community will be related to the studies already undertaken of other religious and ethnic communities in Quebec and Canada. Third, we expect that results of the intensive and comparative work will bring about working hypotheses about the nature of life within ethnic communities and the role of these communities in the Canadian and broader North American environment. These projects will utilize and further refine the skills and methods of Concordia University researchers, from a wide array of disciplines, who are already conducting research into the life of ethnic and religious communities.

The Department of Religion and Academic Resources

The department has an outstanding reputation throughout North America for its research, publication, and teaching that has been well established for more than a decade. The department of Religion at Concordia was among the first of its kind in Canada. It did not develop out of a prior theologically oriented academic

unit, but took at its inception the methodological and theoretical perspectives of the "History of Religions" and "Comparative Religions" schools as its basis. This meant that the methods and theories of a number of disciplines: history, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and literary studies, separately and in combination, were viewed as essential for shedding light upon the data of the world's religions. In its earliest phases, then, the department offered courses in the study of Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese Religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The faculty were expected to have a primary expertise in one of the major religious traditions of the world, a secondary expertise in another, and "control" of several of the disciplinary approaches germane to the "Comparative Study of Religion".

The department has taken as its subject for research and graduate teaching the study of religion and modernization. It does this by examining religion as one cultural element in the life of modern and contemporary religious communities and groups. The vast array of religious phenomena and religious dimensions of usually-regarded secular phenomena are the organizing foci for examining issues and developments concerning the place of religion in formation of group identity, key rituals of family life, patterns of authority, changes in the role and status of women, ways and latent purposes for which sacred texts and rituals are utilized, and processes by which norms for moral

action are derived, justified, and propagated, etc. All of these issues have been explored through Quebec and Canadian government funded group research projects and the results presented at scholarly meetings, and in journals and books. In the process of these investigations and publications, the department has built up an extensive group of models, theories, hypotheses, as well as methods for training graduate students to be active researchers. In addition to the various disciplines of the social sciences and the humanities that are represented in the training of the members of the department (including sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, and religious studies), scholars from other departments at Concordia and other universities have played important roles in the research and teaching activities. Scholars from the fields of anthropology, sociology, psychology, history, sciences religieuses, and theology have been participants and often co-directors of these projects. Further, the newly established joint Ph.D. program with the department of sciences religieuses at the University of Quebec at Montreal adds an extremely well respected francophone resource to the department of Religion's studies of comparative religious ethics and of communities and groups in Quebec.

The Chair in Hindu Studies will build upon the resources of the department of Religion and other departments already named at Concordia University as well as other units of Montreal universities. At present the department of Religion possesses

four fulltime scholars in South Asian religions, one of whom studies Hinduism as his primary speciality, Associate Professor David Miller. Professor Sheila McDonough, whose primary area of expertise is Islam in the Indian sub-continent, has a secondary area of speciality in Hinduism. Associate Professors Steven Collins and John Rossner, have considerable knowledge of Hindu data. Professors Miller and Collins regularly teach courses, at the undergraduate and graduate levels, entirely or in part devoted to the study of Hinduism. Professors McDonough and Miller have held Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute Fellowships for study in India, and Professor McDonough was a Director of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute in Delhi (1971). In addition, two professors who will be of great help in furthering the work of the Chair, Profs. Sahni of the department of Economics and Prof. Hill of the department of History, were themselves Directors in 1984-5 and in 1986-8.

Professor Miller has organized and directed the Shastri Summer Programs in Montreal (1974) and in India (1981). Professors McDonough and Miller have contributed chapters to Robert D. Baird, Religion in Modern India (1981), which serves as the basic text in many undergraduate and graduate courses on India. It should be noted that many of the professors from the department of Religion are active in local Indian community groups, such as the Hindu Mission of Canada, the India-Canada Association and the National Association of Canadians of origins in India. The

faculty of the department of Sciences Religieuses at UQAM provide a strong sociological component in terms of the study of religion in Quebec. Finally, at McGill University, there are important resources for learning Indian language skills, and Prof. Catherine Young of the Faculty of Religious Studies has a major research interest in Indian religion.

While there is not the room in this proposal to discuss every aspect of the department's earlier research, two additional interests are particularly relevant. First, the model for studying an ethnic/religious group in Montreal has been established through the department's work on the Montreal Jewish community. Research and publications on this community by Profs. Lightstone, Robinson, and Oppenheim have already examined such issues as ritual development in religious institutions and family life, changing ethical norms, the place of the "homeland" in the self-understanding of the group, etc. In fact, a Ph.D. student, Ms. Pearl Ostroff, who has been in contact with members of the Hindu community in Montreal: Adaptation and Change." Second, there is a demonstrated expertise in the area of the roles and status of women in ethnic/religious groups. This particular feature of communal life has already been explored in terms of Jewish, Christian, Muslim groups and new religious movements in Montreal and in Canada.

The Proposed Chair and its Support by the Indo-Canadian Community of Quebec

In February of 1984, Professor M.N.S. Swamy, of the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science of Concordia University sent, on behalf of interested members of the Indo-Canadian Community, a proposal to the then Rector of Concordia, Dr. J.W. O'Brien, suggesting that a Chair in Hindu Studies be created in one of the Montreal universities. Further, since Concordia University has a strong department of Religion, Prof. Swamy suggested that it would be most appropriate to have the Chair in that institution. Prof. Swamy, in making that proposal was acting as Chairman of a steering committee made up of members of the Indo-Canadian community, resident in Montreal. Rector O'Brien, acting with the support of the department of Religion, the Dean and the Rector's Cabinet, accepted Prof. Swamy's proposal, in principle, and formal arrangements were made at various levels in the university to establish the process and procedures for creating a Chair. To date, over \$400,000 has been raised from the community at large towards the establishment of the Chair and deposited with the University. At the same time, it should be said that the Indo-Canadian Community resident in Montreal, a community of approximately 12,000 persons, not only remains enthusiastic about the creation of a Chair, but also continues to organize cultural events, the profits from which are deposited in the Fund for the Hindu Studies Chair. These are in addition to individual

contributions made by people of origins in India as well as many others.

Along with the amount of money already collected by the community, a grant of \$350,000 (the maximum amount allowed) through the Endowment Assistant Program, under the Ethnic and Multicultural Chairs of Study, would enable the University to appoint a scholar of international reputation to the Chair and to start the program by September 1989.

Concordia University believes that there are many outstanding reasons for the choice of both the city of Montreal and Concordia University as the home for the proposed Chair. Montreal is a tremendously important and central cosmopolitan city in Canada. It has very well established ethnic communities that add a special richness to intellectual and cultural life. Concordia has historically served these various ethnic communities very well. It is also the premier English university to open itself to francophone students.

The Chair fits in very well the role that Concordia¹ has taken up for itself. This university not only satisfies the needs of the traditional full-time undergraduate and graduate students, but it is very successful in reaching out to non-traditional students. Through vigorous part-time university programs, independent programs, night courses, and institutional supports for mature

students, the University provides a place for students of diverse backgrounds and vocations to come into contact with high level academic and cultural life.

The department of Religion and Concordia University are looking forward to the opportunity of serving as the home of the Hindu Studies Chair. The department's research and teaching in Hindu and Indian studies and in religious/ethnic groups in Canada testifies to its background and to its strength to vigorously promote the Chair. The University's commitment to providing an academic center for the various communities of Montreal as well as for an excitingly diverse group of students, indicates that the Chair will have a profound academic and cultural impact. We firmly believe that the development of the Indo-Canadian communities in Canada and rich on-going dialogue between the countries of Canada and India will be dramatically furthered through this Chair.

((This document is a supplement to and clarification of the original proposal for a Chair in Hindu Studies which was submitted by Concordia University in November 1987. The supporting documents from the different administrators and academic units of Concordia as well as from the Indian community can be found attached to that original submission.))